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The President's Daily Brief

October 28, 1976

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Top Secret

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

October 28, 1976

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USSR-CHINA-US: *The Soviets apparently were surprised by Secretary Kissinger's recent statements warning the USSR not to threaten China.*

The Secretary's remarks undercut the public image Moscow is trying to build of the USSR's willingness to make a fresh start in its dealings with the Chinese.

Moscow's reaction suggests that the Soviets are anxious to limit additional use by the US of the officially authorized article by Victor Louis that appeared in France Soir last week. The article warned the Chinese that they had one month to respond to Soviet overtures for better relations.

Yesterday Pravda carried an authoritative piece denying that Moscow entertains any hostile intentions toward China. It cited Brezhnev's statement at the plenum on Monday, in which he offered to improve relations with China, as proof of Soviet good faith.

Pravda said that the Secretary's motive was to impress Peking and to spoil or strain Sino-Soviet relations. It also accused the Secretary of trying to score domestic political points. Pravda stated that the tactic would probably not work, but it admonished "those who resort to political fabrications in Washington."

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USSR: *Satellite photography of Severodvinsk shipyard shows that the Soviets have produced a new variant of the Delta series of ballistic missile submarines to accommodate the new SS-NX-18 missile.*

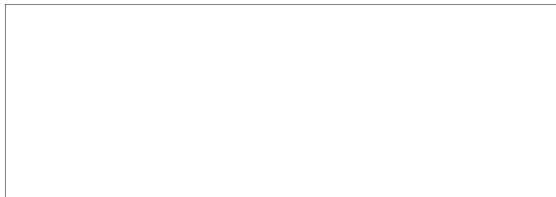
We had believed earlier there would be no external difference between submarines carrying the SS-N-8 missile and those intended to carry the newer SS-NX-18.

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We know that the four D-II units produced last year and now operational carry the SS-N-8. The photography shows that the height of the missile bay areas of the four D-class submarines launched at Severodvinsk this year has been increased by some three to six feet beyond that of the four D-II units produced in 1975.

The increase in the height of the missile bay, therefore, apparently is necessary to accommodate the SS-NX-18 missile system. This suggests that all D-I submarines and the four D-II units launched in 1975 will have to undergo extensive modification if the Soviets decide to install SS-NX-18 missiles in them.



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The SS-NX-18 is the first Soviet submarine-launched ballistic missile with MIRVs, although it is also being tested with a single re-entry vehicle. We estimate its maximum range to be about 4,000 nautical miles. The SS-NX-18 could be operational within 18 months.

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USSR: The bumper grain harvest announced by General Secretary Brezhnev on Monday permits the USSR the options of curtailing grain purchases, exporting some grain to the West, and shipping more to traditional communist clients. The Soviet outlay of hard currency to pay for agricultural imports can also be reduced.

Brezhnev's statement that this year's grain crop would "either very closely approach the figures of the record year 1973, or even surpass it" suggests that the total yield will be 222 million tons or more. Such a harvest would permit the rebuilding of livestock herds and grain reserves, both of which had been depleted by two years of below-normal production.

The Soviet Union

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has purchased from the US 4 million tons of corn and 2.65 million tons of wheat.

Despite the good grain crop, total farm output is likely to rise by only about 1.5 percent this year because of the sharp decline in livestock production. Agricultural growth is far from the 8.5-percent rebound planned this year and will continue to depress the growth of gross national product.

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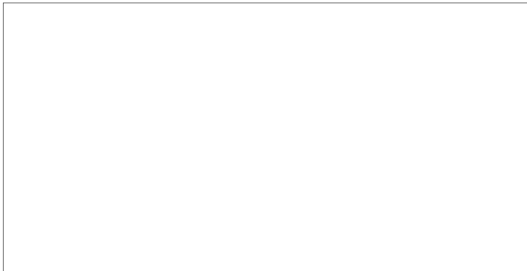
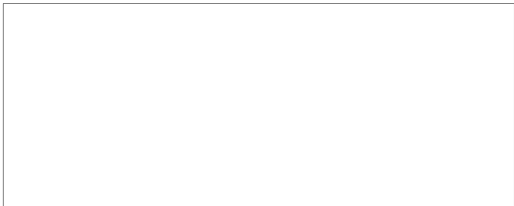
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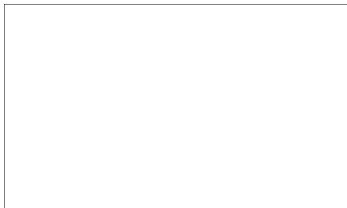
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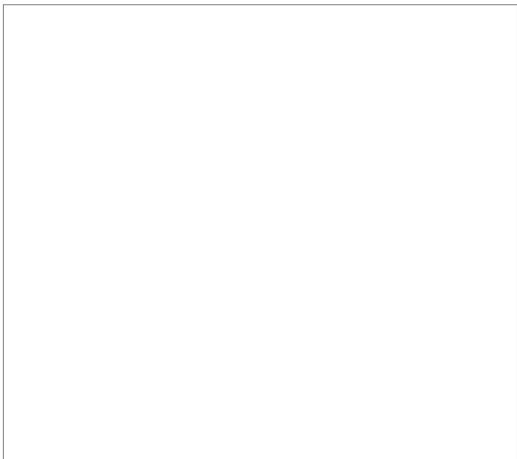
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EGYPT: *Egypt today holds its first parliamentary election in which candidates are legally permitted to run on opposition platforms. Although the outcome will not reflect the full extent of current discontent with the government, the new People's Assembly may prove to be less malleable than its predecessors.*

Approximately 1,600 candidates are vying for the 350 People's Assembly seats. The candidates are running under a variety of banners in a carefully regulated experiment with what passes for a multi-party system.

The Arab Socialist Union remains Egypt's only legal political party, but in an effort to provide a safety valve for the controlled expression of opposition viewpoints, President Sadat early this year permitted the formation of three ASU subdivisions--a leftist, a rightist, and a centrist organization, the last comprising the majority of the ASU and representing the pro-government viewpoint.

To a considerable extent, the leftist and rightist groups do represent opposition viewpoints. Both groups, however, must operate within the constraints of the ASU's basic pro-government policies, and both are dependent on the ASU's government-controlled apparatus for campaign facilities.

Largely for this reason, over half of the candidates have shunned ASU sponsorship completely to run as independents. Although the government is probably covertly sponsoring many of them, it does not have a clear picture of the political leanings of all the independents.

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The government has avoided direct manipulation of the campaign. Nevertheless, there seems little question that openly pro-government candidates will win a large majority of the parliamentary seats.

Government policy undoubtedly will not be seriously influenced by an Assembly in which probably no more than 25 to 30 percent of the deputies will be either in the opposition or true independents, but an Assembly constituted along these lines would not be the rubber stamp its predecessors have been.

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NOTES

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Chinese

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Soviet Premier Kosygin's
*illness evidently pre-
vented him from deliv-
ering the report on the
five-year plan to the
Supreme Soviet yester-
day.*

Kosygin attended the Supreme So-
viet session, as did all the lead-
ers. The Premier was active dur-
ing the recent visit of Mongolian
leader Tsedenbal, and observers
have noted no visible signs of
illness.

For the first time under the pres-
ent leadership, the chairman of
the state planning committee made
the report. By passing over First
Deputy Premier Mazurov, the lead-
ership again showed that it was
unwilling to give any public sign
that a younger member may be in
line as a successor to a top post.

* * *

The Soviet Union is con-
*structing large amphib-
ious assault ships
which, at 500 feet in
length,*

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Only recently has construction at
Kaliningrad on the Baltic prog-
ressed far enough to permit us to
determine the type of ship being
built. Apparently it will be a
combination tank landing ship and
amphibious transporter dock, a
multiple function concept adopted
by the US during World War II.

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The new ship will be able to discharge amphibious vehicles from both ends and is the first Soviet ship built with a floodable-well deck. This deck [redacted]

[redacted] can accommodate small amphibious craft, hovercraft, or other vehicles. The assault ship apparently will have a helicopter landing platform at the stern but does not appear to have storage space for a large force of troop-carrying helicopters.

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The ship is a logical step in the evolution of Soviet amphibious warfare capabilities, which have been improving steadily since the early 1960s. The Soviets are just approaching the capability to transport their entire naval infantry force of 10,000 to 12,000 men. They are unable to move large ground force units except by merchant ship.

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Yugoslavia has rescheduled a state visit by French President Giscard for early December. Planning for a visit by Soviet party leader Brezhnev is also apparently under way.

The Giscard visit was originally postponed in September apparently because of Tito's poor health. Since then, the 84-year-old Yugoslav President has made only infrequent public appearances and has received no foreign guests.

The Soviets would like to arrange a meeting between Tito and Brezhnev in conjunction with a trip by the Soviet leader to neighboring Romania in late November. Belgrade will make much of Giscard's visit as a counter to those who would see Tito's meeting with Brezhnev as a Yugoslav "drift" eastward.

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